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The free companies in the hundred years' war.

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THE FREE COMPANIES IN THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

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IN

THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

By

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P R E F A C E

This study seeks to reveal the rôle in the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) of the military institution of "Free Companies", and, more fundamentally, to show their role in the decline of feudalism. To this end it is necessary to observe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries two grand events - the emergence of the bourgeoisie and the monarchical centralization of government - which combined to provide employment for the Free Companies. Then a survey of the activities of the Free Companies, together with an explanation of their organization and tactics, will show why at first they served a real need of belligerent princes, and why later numerous attempts were made to crush these bands. Finally, after a narrative of the methods which extirpated the Free Companies, it will be possible to draw two conclusions: (1) in European military history the Free Companies appeared in the period between the flourishing of the feudal array and the beginning of the national army, and were largely responsible for the transition itself; and (2) in European political history the Free Companies were dominant factors in the destruction of feudalism, and thereby in the disruption of the medieval structure.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B. É. C.	Bibliothèque de l' École des Chartes
B. É. H. É.	Bibliothèque de l' École des Hautes-Études
C. d. S.	Chroniken der deutschen Städte
C. C.F.	Collection des chroniques françaises
C. M. H.	Cambridge Medieval History
D. I.	Collection des documents inédits de l' Histoire de France
E. H. R.	English Historical Review
Foedera	Foedera, conventiones, litterae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica inter reges Angliae et alios quosvis imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes, vel communitates
H. F.	Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France: Rerum gallicarum et francicarum scriptores

J. S.	Journal des Savants
"Mandements"	"Mandements et actes divers de Charles V"
M. H. F.	Collection complète des mémoires relatifs à l' Histoire de France
N. M. H. F.	Nouvelle collection des mémoires pour servir à l' Histoire de France depuis le XIII^{e} siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^{e} siècle
Ord.	Ordonnances des rois de France de la troisième race
R. C.	Records Commission
R. D. M.	Revue des Deux Mondes
R. H.	Revue Historique
R. I. s.	Rerum Italicarum scriptores
R. P.	Rotuli Parliamentorum
R. s.	Rolls series
S. H. F.	Société de l' Histoire de France
Statutes	Statutes of the Realm

C H A P T E R I.

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE MIDDLE AGES

The birth of the Middle Ages occurred with the appearance of feudalism. In the eighth and ninth centuries, i.e., the Carolingian Age, the cessation of commerce signified the reversion of a civilization to a completely agricultural stage.[1] This relapse resulted in the rudimentary financial organization of the Carolingians because poll taxes and market fees became nonexistent. Therefore, the state, unable to maintain a professional bureaucracy, distributed its only source of wealth, land, in the form of fiefs to its functionaries.[2] The latter as vassals in the ceremony of homage and fealty promised loyalty, military service, payment of the three aids (for the knighting of the king's eldest son, the marriage of his eldest daughter, and for his ransom in case of capture), and acknowledged his rights to the droit de gîte (feasting and entertainment of the king by the vassals), relief

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1. Henri Pirenne, Mahomet et Charlemagne (Paris, Félix Alcan, 1937), p. 219.
2. Joseph Calmette, La Société féodale (Paris, Armand Colin, 1923), pp. 7,8.

(inheritance tax), and wardship (lord's taking possession of the fief in the case of the vassal's heir being a minor, and holding it until the end of the minority).[1] The vassals proceeded to make their offices hereditary,[2] and secured grants of immunity,[3] i.e., freedom from royal interference, thus becoming practically independent. Such was feudalism, a political organization based on land tenure.[4] This system of government was the distinguishing element of the medieval period, setting it off from the era of strong monarchy which preceded it, and likewise from the age of strong monarchy which succeeded it.

During the eleventh century, however, stirring events happened which become potent factors in the downfall of feudalism, and thus in the breakup of the medieval epoch. In that century, to an amazing degree there appeared energy, vigor of spirit, and healthiness, resulting in a fecundity of families. Bearing out Malthus' theory, this increase in

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1. Carl Stephenson, Mediaeval Feudalism (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1942), pp. 26-30.
2. "Capitulary of Kiersy", A Source Book for Mediaeval History, ed. Oliver J. Thatcher and Edgar H. McNeal (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), no. 196.
3. Examples in Thatcher and McNeal, op. cit., nos. 193,4.
4. George Burton Adams, Civilization During the Middle Ages (revised edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 195.

population exerted pressure on the food supply. Consequently, much of the population became mobile, younger sons especially seeking their fortunes abroad.[1] To this restlessness may be ascribed the conquests of the Moslem possessions of Sardinia, Corsica, Toledo, Valencia, and Sicily which reopened the western Mediterranean to the shipping of Christian Europe.[2]

The increase in population and the revival of commerce combined to reëstablish the class of professional merchants who, because of their enmity to the status quo, proceeded to secure the emancipation of the cities. Due to the unsettled conditions of society they settled outside the bourgs (fortified places) in localities particularly easy of access, their district being the "new bourg" (faubourg) from whence their name "burghers" or "burghenses".[3] This made friction inevitable because the bourg and faubourg represented diametrically opposed outlooks, the former being

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1. Henri Pirenne, Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade, tr. Frank D. Halsey (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1925), p. 81; Eileen E. Power, "Peasant Life and Rural Conditions", C. M. H. (New York, Macmillan Co., 1932), V. VII, p. 723.

2. Pirenne, Medieval Cities, p. 93.

3. Henri Pirenne, "Northern Towns and Their Commerce", C. M. H. (New York, Macmillan Co., 1929), V. VI, pp.512, 3, 517.

adapted to a rural (i.e., agricultural), feudal society dominated by a patriarchal, authoritative government which restricted personal liberty as well as land tenure, and which imposed innumerable burdensome exactions, together with the most cumbersome of judicial systems.[1] On the other hand, the faubourg typified an urban, capitalistic society which demanded the recognition of personal liberty and personal property, along with the abolition of the onerous feudal dues, and the establishment of a rational judicial procedure. Thus, the burghers' wrath was aroused over being subjected to the will of the lord of the bourg.[2] Especially bitter against the ecclesiastical lords,[3] the struggle culminated in the period from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, the great age of the emancipation of the cities.[4]

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1. Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, ed. Arthur C. Howland (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press), V. IV., no. IV, pp. 2-20.

2. Pirenne, "Northern Towns and Their Commerce", op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 514-5.

3. The Autobiography of Guibert, Abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy, tr. C. C. Swinton Bland (London, George Routledge and Sons, 1925), pp. 152-178; Lambert of Hersfeld, "Annals" in Thatcher and McNeal, op. cit., no. 309.

4. A. Giry and A. Réville, Emancipation of the Medieval Towns, tr. Frank Greene Bates and Paul Emerson Titsworth (New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1907), p. 29.

The emancipation of the cities heralded the arrival of a new era in western Europe. Hitherto dominated by the clergy and nobility, society must now give due weight to the middle class.[1]

The French monarchs took advantage of the emergence of the bourgeoisie to form an alliance with it which proved to be instrumental in the destruction of feudalism. The new politique began with Louis VII (1137-80), who granted or confirmed charters of franchises, encouraged the formation of communes in the ecclesiastical demesne, and declared that ecclesiastical cities with communes were royal towns.[2] Philip II Augustus (1180-1223) went much further, confirming or increasing the privileges of the enfranchised towns in his demesne and even of those outside it,[3] as well as establishing or confirming communes.[4] In return for his concessions he obtained a rent from the

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1. Pirenne, Medieval Cities, p. 221.

2. Achille Luchaire, Histoire des institutions monarchiques de la France sous les premiers Capétiens (2nd edition: Paris, 1891), t. II, pp. 179 ff.

3. Recueil des actes de Philippe Auguste, roi de France, publ. by H. F. Delaborde, under the direction of Élie Berger (Paris, l'Académie des Inscriptions, 1916), t. I, nos. 10, 15, 19, 30, 40, 43, 46, 52, 73, 84, 168,9.

4. Ibid., nos. 35, 43, 53, 101, 210, 280.

communes[1] which enabled him to continue the work of centralizing the monarchy[2] which had been begun by his grandfather, Louis VI the Fat (1108-37), who had displaced the hereditary noble officials at court with clergymen and burghers.[3] The prévôts (administrators of the royal domain) having made, like all officials supported by fiefs, their offices hereditary and rapacious, Philip II instituted the position of bailli in the north and seneschal in the south to supervise the prévôts, the new functionaries receiving salaries.[4] Moreover, he ended the practice of the king's being a vassal of some lord for a fief.[5] The saintly Louis IX (1226-70) continued the alliance, making heavy

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1. G. Bourgin, La commune de Soissons et le groupe communal soissonnais (Paris, B. É. H. É., 1908), pp. 250, 265.

2. The policy of centralization meant placing the powers of government in the hands of officials who were wholly subservient to the monarch's will in contrast to that of decentralization, as exemplified in feudalism, which meant distributing the royal powers among many officials who merely owed nominal allegiance to the crown.

3. James Westfall Thompson and Edgar Nathaniel Johnson, An Introduction to Medieval Europe, 300-1500 (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1937), p. 477.

4. A. Lefèvre, "Les baillis de la Brie au XIII^{e} siècle," B. É. C. (Paris, 1860), série 5, t. I, pp. 179 ff.; O. Tixier, Essai sur les baillis et sénéchaux royaux (Orléans, 1898), pp. 11 ff.

5. Recueil des actes de Philippe Auguste, t. I, nos. 139, 422, 445; Actes du Parlement de Paris, ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris, 1863), t. I, no. 879.

exactions of his demesnial towns and of the episcopal towns.[1] Among other things he used the money thus procured for the institution of the enquêteurs to check on the baillis and senechals,[2] and to execute throughout the realm his decisions as chief justiciar, because by the end of his reign the king's justice was being invoked in the farthest corners of the kingdom.[3] Philip IV the Fair (1285-1314) completed the monarchical-bourgeois alliance by taking as his advisers bourgeois lawyers who ascribed to him omnipotent prerogatives, superior to those of both Holy Roman emperor and pope.[4] However, Philip IV heavily exploited the commercial order in order to develop the policy of bureaucratic absolutism and specialization of administrative functions.[5]

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1. L. H. Labande, Histoire de Beauvais et des ses institutions communales (Paris, 1892), pp. 242,3; Abel Lefranc, Histoire de la ville de Noyon et de ses institutions jusqu'à la fin du XIIIe siècle (Paris, B. É. H. É., 1888), document no. 47.

2. Charles Petit-Dutaillis, "Saint Louis", C. M. H., Vol. VI, p. 349.

3. Textes relatifs à l'histoire du Parlement de Paris, ed. Charles V. Langlois (Paris, 1888), nos. 23-61.

4. Charles V. Langlois, "Philippe le Bel", Histoire de France, ed. Ernest Lavisse (Paris, Hachette et Cie, 1901), t. III, partie 2, pp. 125,6, 286-9.

5. Thompson and Johnson, op. cit., pp. 509,10.

The emergence of the middle class and the monarchical centralization of government were wedges which cracked, and led later to the dismantling of the feudal structure. They thus inaugurated the disintegration of the Middle Ages, for feudalism was the main buttress of medievalism.

C H A P T E R II.

THE RISE OF THE FREE COMPANIES

Of crucial significance in the monarchical-bourgeois alliance was its relation to freeing the king from complete dependence on his feudal army. To centralize the governmental administration the king must perforce subdue unruly vassals, a task requiring a strong, loyal army to replace the old levy composed of these same vassals, who, besides being useless to this particular policy, were bound to serve him in any cause for only forty days,[1] and who were, moreover, notorious for their want of discipline.[2] Therefore, in fostering the development of enfranchised towns and communes, the French kings persistently demanded that such localities either must furnish levies formed from their citizens or obtain exemption from service by paying imposts.[3]

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1. Les Établissements de saint Louis, ed. Paul Viollet (Paris, S. H. F., 1881), t. II, pp. 95, 6; Rotuli Hundredorum (London, R. C., 1812), V. II, pp. 710, 1.

2. Chronicon Walteri de Hemingburgh, Vulgo Hemingford nuncupati, de gestis regum Angliae (1048-1346), ed. H. C. Hamilton (London, English Historical Society, 1848-9), V. II, pp. 179, 80.

3. Olim (Les) ou registres des arrêts rendu par la Cour du roi, publ. by Comte Beugnot (Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1839), t. I, p. 801; Ordonnances des rois de France de la troisième race, ed. E. Laurière (Paris, 1723-1849), t. I, pp. 350, 369, 70; Register Pater de la Chambre des Comptes de Paris, ed. M. Bruel (Paris, 1889), série P, no. 2289.

Furthermore, the commercial revolution furnished another source of revenue to the crown in the form of scutage. In granting concessions to the towns the nobles had been careful to extort huge sums as compensation.[1] Aware of this practice, the monarchs instituted scutage; that is, they declared that the nobles (who were the king's vassals) might commute their required military service into money payments to the throne. The English kings especially made a cardinal point of resorting to scutage.[2]

Possessing adequate revenue, the monarchs could use the new military institution of "Free Companies". As has already been stated, the eleventh century had produced large families; and especially younger sons of eminent families were seeking careers abroad as members of the new class of professional merchants. They were even readier to seek money and fame as mercenaries.[3] In the twelfth century these

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1. Giry and Réville, op. cit., p. 18.

2. Liber Niger Scaccarii, ed. T. Hearn (Oxford, 1728), V. I, pp. 148,9; Pipe Roll 33 Henry II, ed. J. Hunter (London, R. C., 1833-44), pp. 75 ff.; Rotuli Litteraum Clausarum, ed. T. D. Hardy (London, R. C., 1835), V. I, p. 377; Select Charters Illustrative of English Constitutional History, ed. William Stubbs (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1881), p. 364; Sources of English Constitutional History, ed. Carl Stephenson and Frederick G. Marcham (New York and London, Harper and Brothers, 1937), no. 27 D.

3. Pirenne, Medieval Cities, p. 81.

adventurers formed associations known as "Free Companies", i.e., bands which though they fought in the pay of kings or nobles in time of war, in time of peace recognized no rules but their own and lived by pillaging. The leader of such a band was a captain who later received the name of condottiere, while the members were called adventurers, brigands, Cotereaux,[1] freebooters, freelancers, pillagers, ravishers, soldiers of fortune, and later condotti and Écorcheurs.

The sanguinary twelfth century was most propitious for the appearance of the Free Companies. During King Louis VII's absence on the crusade of 1147-50 the brigands ravaged France;[2] their activities increased in 1150 when they were joined by ex-crusaders reduced to pillaging by the disasters of the crusade. Brigandage increased also on account of quarrels between the Kings of Aragon and Navarre, the Viscount of Béarn and the Saracens of Spain, and the twenty years' struggle in Brabant and Lorraine over the succession

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1. This word is probably derived from Coteria, the subdivision of a rural parish; hence the bands may have originated in these districts.

2. "Suger's letter to Louis VII"; "Vie de Suger par le Frère Guillaume"; both in Oeuvres complètes de Suger, ed. A. Lecoy de la Marche (Paris, S. H. F., 1867), pp. 258-60, 394,5.

to Godefroy de Bouillon. These broils resulted in France's being infested by hordes of Aragonese, Basques, Brabançons, Cotereaux, Mainades, Navarrese, and Triaverdins.[1]

These predatory bands aroused the wrath of the monarchs. Louis VII of France and Frederick I Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire agreed in 1162 not to hire them; furthermore, they decreed that should any one employ them then the lay and ecclesiastical lords were to march against the malefactor and summon the king.[2] The pious Louis VII kept his word, but was unable to prevent others from using the Free Companies. The Count of Chalons, for example, employed them to ravage the great abbey of Cluny.[3] Frederick I, however, broke his word by hiring for the siege of Rome a company of Brabançons commanded by an old cleric of Cambrai, Guillaume.[4]

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1. H. Géraud, "Les Routiers au XII^{e} siècle", B. É. C. (Paris, 1841-2), t. III, p. 126.

2. Archives administratives de la ville de Reims, ed. P. Varin (Paris, 1839-48), t. I, p. 319.

3. "Historia Gloriosi Regis Ludovici VII", H. F., ed. Leopold Delisle (Paris, Victor Palmé, 1877), t. XII, p. 131.

4. Geoffroi de Vigeois, "Chronicon" in ibid., t. XII, p. 446.

During the last three decades of the twelfth century the kings employed the Free Companies to combat rebellious vassals. Henry II of England used them in France against his sons, Henry Courtmantel, Richard the Lionhearted, and Geoffrey,[1] and in England against the Earl of Norfolk.[2] Philip Augustus hired them to subdue a feudal coalition composed of the Archbishop of Rheims, the Duke of Burgundy, and the Counts of Blois, Flanders, and Sancerre,[3] and also to fight his extremely belligerent vassal, Henry II of England.[4]

Particularly during the brief periods of truce, the repulsive activities of the Free Companies led to projects to crush them. When unemployed their procedure was to take to vagabondge, disregarding all laws and living by plundering.[5]

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1. Ibid., t. XII, p. 443; "Gesta Regis Henrici secundi Benedicti abbatis", H. F., t. XII, p. 153; "Historia rerum Anglicarum Willelmi Parvi, de Newburgh", H. F., t. XIII, p. 113.

2. Gesta Regis Henrici secundi Benedicti abbatis, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1867: R.s. no. 49), V. I, pp. 72,3.

3. Guillaume le Breton, "Philippeis", H. F., t. XVII, p. 136; Chronique latine de Guillaume de Nangis, ed. H. Géraud (Paris. S. H. F.. 1843), t. I, p. 73.

4. Geoffroi de Vigeois in H. F., t. XVIII, p. 215.

5. Geoffroi de Vigeois, "Chronicon", Nova Bibliotheca mss. librorum, ed. Philippe Labbe (Paris, 1657), t. II, p. 328; Chronica Roberti de Torigneio, Abbatis Monasterii Sancti Michaelis in Periculo Maris, ed. Richard Howlett (London, 1889; R. s. no. 82, part IV), p. 282.

During one of these interims the Brabançons actually used Beaufort castle in Limousin as a base, but in 1177 the Viscount and Bishop of Limoges captured it, massacring 2000 men and women, including its captain, Guillaume of Cambrai; thereupon, Guillaume's command passed to Louvart, but the band was not exterminated.[1] The Free Companies' ravishing of the faithful and their sacrileges in churches[2] resulted in their excommunication by the Lateran Council in 1179.[3] Probably hoping to eradicate them in a holy cause, Pope Alexander III in 1181 hired 20,000 of them to fight the Moors.[4] Then in 1183 a poor carpenter of Auvergne, Durant, formed a religious association, popularly known as the "Capuchonnés," to destroy the pillagers, attracting to his banner people in all stations of life.[5] In 1183 the

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1. Geoffroi de Vigeois in H. F., t. XII, p. 446.

2. Les Grandes Chroniques de France, ed. Paulin Paris (Paris, 1836-40, 6 t.), t. IV, p. 20; Rigord, "De gestis Philippi Augusti Francorum regis," H. F., t. XVIII, p. 11.

3. Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio, ed. J. D. Mansi (Florence and Venice, 1759-98, 31 v.), V. XXII, col. 232, 3.

4. Benedict (R. s.), V. I, p. 276.

5. Les Grandes Chroniques, t. IV, p. 21; Geoffroi de Vigeois in H. F., t. XVIII, p. 219; Chanoine anonyme de Laon "Chronique," H. F., t. XVIII, p. 705.

Capuchonnés attacked one of the deceased Courtmantel's old bands at Dun-le-Roi in Berry, killing between 7000 and 17,000;[1] a few weeks later they slaughtered 9000 freebooters under Courbaran in Rouergue;[2] and the Capuchonné nobles slew 3000 in Auvergne.[3]

After these disasters the freelances, not daring to persist in vagabond companies, readily sought employment. Many returned to the seignorial ranks: this was the resort of Louvart and Sanche de Savagnac, who joined a partisan of Courtmantel and then the Count of Toulouse.[4] Others, like Mercadier, who later succeeded Louvart, served Richard the Lionhearted, whose bosom friend he became.[5] Others attached themselves to the Albigensian heretics,[6] thus arousing once more the wrath of the church, which in 1209, as a condition

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1. Geoffroi de Vigeois in ibid., t. XVIII, p. 219; Chanoine anonyme de Laon in ibid., t. XVIII, p. 706; le Breton, "Philippeis", and Rigord, "De gestis Philippi Augusti Francorum regis", in ibid., t. XVII, pp. 11, 67, 133.

2. Chanoine anonyme de Laon in Ibid., t. XVIII, p. 706.

3. Robert d' Auxerre in ibid., t. XVIII, p. 251.

4. Geoffroi de Vigeois in ibid., t. XVIII, p. 223.

5. The Annals of Roger of Hoveden, ed. and tr. Henry T. Riley (London, Henry G. Bohn, 1853), V. II, pp. 452-4.

6. "Letter of Pope Celestine III to Archbishop Imbert of Arles", H. F., t. XIX, p. 334 a.

of lifting a ban of excommunication upon him, ordered the Count of Toulouse to rid his dominions of all Free Companies.[1] Nevertheless, he, the Count of Foix, and the latter's son continued to employ them.[2]

Finally, however, a powerful combination succeeded in ridding France of the dreaded ravishers for over a century. When in the Treaty of Paris (1229),[3] the Count of Toulouse promised not only to expel but also to punish the mercenaries, they returned to their old life of vagabondage; but the towns of Cahors and Figeac, together with the Church and the nobility, united against them.[4] This league doubtless overcame the adventurers, for there is subsequently no mention of the hitherto thoroughly notorious Free Companies until the fourteenth century.

Sicily provided very fertile soil for the next cropping up of the organization of Free Companies. There in centralizing the government the Norman rulers had heavily relied on mercenaries.[5] Frederick II, himself "something of

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1. Dom Vaissette et Dom Devic, Histoire générale de Languedoc (Toulouse, 1874-89), t. III, p. 165.
2. Pierre de Vaux-Cernai, "Historia Albigensis", H. F., t. XIX, pp. 43 a, 61 b, 70 b.
3. It concluded the war between the French crown and the Count of Toulouse.
4. Charles Justel, Histoire généalogique de la maison de Turenne (Paris, 1645), documents on pp. 43-5.
5. Charles Homer Haskins, The Normans in European History (Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915), p. 231.

a condottiere", [1] had a policy, on the one hand, of using Sicily as a source of funds, which was natural because her location enabled her to profit from the commercial revolution of the eleventh century, and, on the other hand, of using Germany as a reservoir of men, which was fitting because it was overrun with impecunious knights. This practice resulted in the fact that German nobles like Count Jordan became commanders of large mercenary bands in Italy, where they became the forerunners of the powerful condottieri like Sir John Hawkwood and Duke Werner Urslingen.[2]

In Sicily there arose a Free Company which enjoyed an amazingly long and successful career in the Byzantine Empire and above all in the Duchy of Athens. After Frederick II's death (1250) the Angevin-Aragonese dynastic struggle resulted in the island's being infested by swarms of mercenaries.[3] The end of the war in 1302 meant unemployment for the soldiers; but Roger de Flor, a mercenary naval captain, formed the "Grand Company" composed of 6500 Catalans and Aragonese (1500 horse and 5000 foot). This formidable army sold dearly its services

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1. Ernst Kantorowicz, Frederick the Second, 1194-1250, tr. E. O. Lorimer (London, Constable and Co., 1931), p. 27.

2. Ibid., p. 661.

3. Saba Malaspina, "Rerum Sicularum libri VI", R. I. s., ed. L. A. Muratori (Milan, 1726), V. VIII, p. 826.

to the Byzantine emperor, who made Flor a Grand Duke and gave him the hand of his niece.[1] The company did creditable work against the Turks, but a quarrel over pay resulted in Flor's murder by the emperor's son. Thereupon, owing allegiance only to itself, the band devastated the peninsula of Gallipoli and the Kingdom of Salonica. Then it served Walter de Brienne, securing the Duchy of Athens for him, but his refusal to pay the troops resulted in their annihilation of Brienne and his army at Kephissos in 1311. Taking as wives the widows and daughters of the vanquished, the victors took control of the Duchy of Athens, later choosing as leader Alfonso Federico, the natural son of the king of Sicily.[2] There, resisting all attempts of the papacy, Venice, and the neighboring principalities to eradicate them, they remained until, worn out by dissipation, they succumbed in 1387.[3]

The Free Companies had flourished, but there now appeared an event which enabled them to rise to the apogee of material spendor while sinking to the nadir of moral depravity.

1. Chronicle of Muntaner, tr. Lady Goodenough (London, 1920-1: Hakluyt Society, series 2, vols. XLVII [I] and L [II]), V. II, pp. 481-6.

2. Ibid., V. II, pp. 512, 3, 552, 575-82.

3. Sir Rennell Rodd, The Princes of Achaia and the Chronicles of Morea (London, Edward Arnold, 1907), V. II, p. 233.

C H A P T E R III.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE FREE COMPANIES

Since other expediencies for obtaining troops to wage the Hundred Years' War had proved unavailing, the English and French monarchs relied very heavily on Free Companies. In England, the feudal cavalry having been ineffective, and the Commissions of Array[1] having been very unpopular in Parliament because the troops thus raised had usually not been paid,[2] King Edward III (1327-77) had to rely on foreign mercenaries. Therefore, he made alliances with members of the German royalty and nobility - Emperor Louis IV, the Elector of Brandenburg, the Duke of Brabant, the Margrave of Juliers, the Counts of Berg, Guelders, Hainault, and the Rhenish Palatinate; he also made use of a number of petty magnates. These worthies supplied him with men at fixed remunerations.[3] It was with these troops that Edward invaded

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1. The device for conscripting the infantry (The Parliamentary Writs, and Writs of Military Summons, ed. F. Palgrave (London, R. C., 1827-34), V. I, pp. 245, 270).

2. Rotuli Parliamentorum (London, R. C., 1767 - 77), V. II, p. 149, 160.

3. Foedera, ed. Thomas Rymer (London, R. C., 1816-69), V. II, pp. 970-3, 979-80, 985, 996, 999.

France in 1339, pillaging and wasting everything in his path.[1] Their payment was made possible by the commercial and industrial revolution of the eleventh century that had stimulated woolen making in Flanders. For Flanders, which secured its wool from England, incidentally furnished the king with a lucrative export duty.[2] Nevertheless, Edward III's tremendous expenses bankrupted him, and thus terminated his foreign agreements.[3] Thereupon, in spite of their unpopularity, he again resorted to Commissions of Array, but soon discarded that device in favor of the indenture system; that is, English captains who had formed Free Companies would engage them for the royal service. This method was both cheaper than the system of foreign alliances, and more effective, because by it the king could entrust control of conquered districts to the captains, who, as they were his subjects, tended to be more faithful than foreign hirelings. A good example of indenture is that of January 28, 1346, whereby Thomas de Dagworth undertook to serve with 300

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1. Les Grandes Chroniques, t. V, p. 377; Second Continuator of Nangis, t. II, p. 164; Eulogium (historiarum sive temporis): Chronicon a monacho quodam Malmesburiensi exaratum, ed. Frank S. Haydon (London, 1858-63, 3 v.: R. S. no. 9), V. III, p. 203.

2. R. P., V. II, pp. 107,8.

3. Foedera, V. II, p. 1186; Calendar of the Charter Rolls (London, 1903) (1341-5), p. 478.

men-at-arms and 600 archers in Brittany, where he was to act as the royal lieutenant.[1]

Because of the inadequacy of the feudal levy, Edward's opponent, Philip VI of France (1328-50), also resorted to the use of mercenaries whom he supported at the expense of the bourgeoisie. At first he hired mostly foreign troops, e.g., those of King John of Bohemia,[2] Duke Henry of Lower Bavaria,[3] Genoese mariners who were employed at the Battle of Sluys,[4] and Genoese crossbowmen whom the King most stupidly ordered to be slaughtered at the Battle of Crecy.[5] Like his uncle, Philip IV the Fair, Philip VI could maintain such troops by commuting the military service of the towns into money payments.[6]

For the same reason that Philip VI had required mercenaries, his son, John II the Good (1350-64), hired

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1. Chronique de Richard Lescot, ed. Jean Lemoine (Paris, Renouard, 1896), p. 78.

2. Layettes du Trésor des Chartes, ed. Pierre Dupuy (Paris, 1863-75), série J 432, no. 11.

3. Friedrich von Weech, Kaiser Ludwig von Baiern und König Johann von Böhmen (Munich, 1860), p. 68.

4. Récits d' un Bourgeois de Valenciennes, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Louvain, 1877), p. 181.

5. Last Continuator of Nangis, t. II, pp. 201,2.

6. Ord., t. II, pp. 394, 425, 505, 507, 568.

Free Companies, beginning by ordering that mercenary knights be hired in groups of 25 to 80.[1]

Thus the Hundred Years' War by driving the opposing kings to the use of Free Companies had enabled them to dispense with the feudal arrays. However, the nefarious actions of the freelances were to force the French crown to erect a military institution based, nevertheless, on that of the Free Companies.

The activities of the Free Companies in the Hundred Years' War may be divided into two categories: (1) those during the periods of actual warfare, and (2) those during the periods of truce and nominal peace. The freebooters served in the royal armies until Dagworth's victory at La Roche Derrien (1347) and the outbreak of the Black Death (1348) resulted in a truce which was extended to 1351.[2] Consequently, deprived of employment, the members of the Free Companies took to vagabondage under leaders like Bacon in Limousin and Croquard in Brittany.[3] With the resumption of Anglo-French hostilities,

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1. Ibid., t. XIV, p. 69.

2. Les Grandes Chroniques, t. V, pp. 487,8, 494.

3. Les Vrayes Chroniques de Messire Jehan le Bel, ed. M. L. Polain (Brussels, Académie Royale de Belgique, 1863), t. II, pp. 144,5; Les Chroniques de Sire Jean Froissart, ed. J.A. C. Buchon (Paris Panthéon littéraire, 1835), t. I, pp. 275,6.

the adventurers could and did return to their "legitimate" trade, serving under the Black Prince at Poitiers, as well as under John the Good.[1]

As John's defeat and capture resulted in a truce,[2] and, consequently, in unemployment for the Free Companies, there arose once more a large number of wandering Free Companies - a Navarrese which laid waste the baillage of Rouen in 1356;[3] an Anglo-Navarrese under Ruffin which raided from Orléans to Chartres, thence to within four or five leagues of Paris in 1357;[4] the "Company Without a Head", composed of many nationalities, which occupied much of France in 1357;[5] the band of 3000 led by Prince Philip of Navarre, Sir James Pipe, and Sir Robert Knolles, which journeyed through Brittany, Normandy, Berry, and Auvergne to the papal seat at

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1. le Bel, t. II, pp. 187-90; Froissart, t, I, p. 333.
2. Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, p. 56.
3. Ibid., t. VI, p. 56.
4. le Bel, t. II, p. 215; Froissart, t. I, p. 373.
5. Chronicon Angliae, 1328-88, auctore monacho quodam Sancti Albani, ed. E. Maunde Thompson (London, 1876: R. s. no. 64), p. 37.

Avignon;[1] Foulque de Laval's Breton company, which devastated the environs of Paris;[2] and that of the ubiquitous Archpriest, Arnaud de Cervole, who plundered everywhere on his march through Provence to Avignon, where the thoroughly frightened pope treated him royally, pardoning his sins and paying him to depart.[3] In 1358 Edward sent two knights to order his captains to evacuate all places taken since the Truce of Bordeaux, but those in Chartrain and Normandy replied that they owed no allegiance to him and held no forts from him, but that either they served King Charles the Bad of Navarre or were independent of all authority. They accordingly remained to raid and pillage.[4] Sir Walter Manny's company of Gascons and Hainaulters ravaged about Calais in 1359;[5] while in

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1. Ibid., p. 39; le Bel, t. II, p. 237; Froissart, t. I, pp. 373, 411-3; Chronicon Henrici Knighton, vel Cnitthon, monachi Leycentrensis, ed. Joseph R. Lumby (London, 1889-95, 2 v.; R. s. no. 92), V. II, p. 102; Adamus Murimuthensis, Chronica sui temporis nunc primum per decem annos acta (1303-47) cum eorundem continuatione a quodam anonymo, ed. Thomas Hog (London, Sumptibus societatis, 1846), p. 191.

2. Last Continuator of Nangis, t. II, p. 258.

3. Chronicon Angliae, p. 39; Froissart, t. I, p. 373; le Bel, t. II, p. 209.

4. Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, p. 95.

5. Knighton, V. II, p. 105.

Champagne the four bands of Sir Peter Audley, Sir Eustache d'Aubrecicourt, Albrecht, and Rabigeois de Derry committed great depredations.[1] Furthermore, when he was not paid by the Duke of Normandy for his efforts against Audley, Sir Broquars de Fenestranges, himself a freebooter, turned his company loose on Champagne, pillaging it more than the Anglo-Navarrese bands, and then entering Lorraine.[2]

Most notable of all these marauders were the "Tard-Venus".[3] The Treaty of Brétigny-Calais (1360),[4] which ended the first period of the Hundred Years' War, relieved the monarchs of the need for mercenaries. Therefore, in spite of Edward III's order for the arrest of all persons living by plunder in France,[5] there assembled in Champagne this great company of Tard-Venus, which overran that province,

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1. le Bel, t. II, pp. 237-9.

2. Ibid., t. II, 243-4; Froissart, t. I, pp. 411,2.

3. The members applied this name to themselves because they considered themselves late participants in the pillaging of France (Froissart, t. I, p. 453).

4. Foedera, V. III, pp. 485-94; Les Grands traités de la Guerre de Cent ans, ed. E. Cosneau (Paris, 1889), pp. 30-68.

5. Foedera, V. III, pp. 630,685.

the Bishoprics of Verdun, Toul, and Langres, the Duchy of Burgundy, the Counties of Macon and Forez, and the Archbishopric of Lyons, where they overwhelmed the royal lieutenant in 1362.[1] Thereupon, as there were too many of them to be quartered in one district, they split into two divisions, Séguin de Batefol commanding the smaller one of 3000, which harried the country from its base at Ause, a league from Lyon; the other part under several leaders - Nandon de Bagerent, Espiote, Carsuelle, Robert Briquet, Ortingo de la Salle, Lamit, and the Bourgs Camus, Breteuil, and de l' Esparre-advanced to the outskirts of Avignon, where it spent the summer waiting for prisoners' ransoms, and the resumption of Anglo-French hostilities.[2] Finally the pope found the device to rid the country of part of them.[3]

At this time many brigands joined in a struggle, which was to prove disastrous for several of their condottieri at the Battle of Cocherel. That personification of evil, King Charles the Bad of Navarre, seeking to prevent

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1. See Chapter V.

2. Froissart, t. I, pp. 453 ff.; Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, pp. 223 ff.; le Bel, t. II, pp. 274-7; Lescot, p. 148; Last Continuator of Nangis, t. II, p. 316 ff.

3. See Chapter V.

Charles V's coronation at Rheims,[1] hired the flower of the Free Companies of Gascons, Navarrese, and English in Normandy, Perche, and Maine. These included the company of Sir John Jouel, which Charles the Bad placed under the command of Captal de Buch,[2] the condottiere who had been entrusted by the Black Prince with the brilliant rear guard action which had discomfited the French at Poitiers.[3] Against this array Charles the Wise sent the able Bertrand du Guesclin and the clever Archpriest.[4] At Cocherel du Guesclin triumphed by rushing in at the decisive moment his reserve of 200 Breton mercenary cavalry.[5] de Buch was captured, Jouel mortally wounded, and the Bascon de Mareul killed.[6]

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1. "Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V par Christine de Pisan," N. M. H. F., eds. J. F. Michaud et B. Poujoulat (Lyon et Paris, Guyot Frères, 1851), série I, t. II, pp. 9, 10.

2. Chronique normande du XIV^e siècle, ed. August et Émile Molinier (Paris, S. H. F., 1882), p. 171; Chronique des quatre premiers Valois, ed. Siméon Luce (Paris, S. H. F., 1862), p. 144.

3. Galfridi le Baker de Swinbroke, Chronicon Angliae, ed. J. A. Giles (London, Bohn, 1847), p. 263.

4. Lescot, pp. 167, 8.

5. Chronique ... Valois, p. 147; "Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin par Cuvelier," D. I., ed. E. Charrière (Paris, 1835 ff.), série 1, no. X (1839, 2 v.), t. I, lines 4744-4818.

6. Chronique ... Valois, p. 147; Cuvelier, t. I, lines 4707-11; 4671-4.

The Breton dynastic war furnished another diversion for those desirous of participating in some hard fighting. The English - favored claimant, John of Montfort, obtained the services of Knolles,[1] Pipe, Sir Hugh Calveley, Hugh Spencer, and the Black Prince's right hand man, Sir John Chandos, while the French - sponsored candidate, the extremely pious Charles of Blois, secured du Guesclin and Manny.[2] The two forces met at Auray in September, 1364, Calveley's rear guard action winning the day.[3] This decisive action resulted in the Treaty of Guérande between John of Montfort and Jeanne de Penthièvre, Charles of Blois' widow,[4] which was soon followed by one between Charles V and Charles the Bad.[5]

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1. Knolles had just returned from acting with Robert Cheney, Robert Briquet, and Carsuelle as lieutenants in Prince Louis of Navarre's band which ravaged Bourbonnais and Auvergne (Froissart, t. I, p. 159).

2. Chronique normande, p. 175; Chronique ... Valois, p. 159; Eulogium, V. III, pp. 235,6.

3. "Mémoires sur du Guesclin", M. H. F., ed. C. B. Petitot (Paris, Foucault, 1819), t. IV, p. 298.

4. Foedera, V. VI, p. 450; "Le livre du bon Jehon, Duc de Bretagne par Guillaume de Saint Andre", D. I., ed. L. Charrière, série 1, no. X, t. II, lines 1585 ff.

5. "Mandements et actes divers de Charles V", D. I., ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1874), série 1, t. XXXIX, no. 225 a.

Thereupon, the Free Companies split into two large divisions, one under the Archpriest and the other under du Guesclin. In 1365 the former left France for Lorraine with a group of Bretons and other brigands who ravaged Champagne and Bar on the way,[1] but the majority of freebooters joined the famous Spanish expedition led by du Guesclin.[2]

The Black Prince's use of freelances to restore King Pedro the Cruel of Castile led to a recurrence of hostilities in the Hundred Years' War. After returning from his great triumph at the Battle of Najera (1367), the Black Prince, in a very difficult plight to pay the Free Companies which he had hired for the campaign,[3] levied a hearth tax in Aquitaine, and turned loose the mercenaries to prey on the people.[4] At once his Gascon vassals complained to his suzerain, Charles the Wise, who promptly summoned the Prince

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1. Last Continuator of Nangis, V. II, p. 359.
2. See Chapter V.
3. Pedro the Cruel had refused to reimburse him (Life of the Black Prince by the Herald of Sir John Chandos, ed. Mildred K. Pope and Eleanor C. Lodge [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1910], pp. 113,4).
4. Chronique ... Valois, pp. 182, 195; Froissart, t. I, pp. 146,7.

to answer their charges at Paris. When the Black Prince refused the demand, the king in 1369 proclaimed Aquitaine forfeited to the French Crown.[1] This exchange of insults inaugurated the second phase of the Hundred Years' War; it, too, provided work for the Free Companies, on the one hand, enabling those in the pay of the English throne to become more independent of it, but, on the other hand, subjecting these same bands to reverses at the hands of the brilliant combination of Charles V and du Guesclin. Placing Knolles at the head of his vassals,[2] the Prince of Wales rehired the Free Companies to embark upon a war of pitiless vengeance,[3] recovering Limoges in a manner which the Herald recorded with astounding callousness, "All were slain or taken by the noble and renowned Prince, whereat all his friends rejoiced greatly around him, and his enemies, I warrant you, had great fear..."[4] The fatal dysentery contracted in Spain,

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1. Chronique ... Valois, p. 188. In a document justifying this act of war Charles accused Edward III of failure to observe the Treaty of Bretigny-Calais, because he had done nothing to rid France of the soldiers of fortune, but, on the contrary, had abetted them (Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, pp. 296-306).

2. Froissart, t. I, p. 577.

3. Chronique ... Valois, p. 207; "Mémoires sur du Guesclin," t. V, pp. 56, 7.

4. Op. cit., p. 125. Froissart states that 3000 men, women, and children were slaughtered (t. I, p. 577).

however, forced the Black Prince to return to England in 1370,[1] the same year which witnessed Chandos' death in a skirmish.[2] This sudden taking off of the supreme commanders meant that the freebooters were henceforth amenable only to their own leaders and not to the throne, for the victor of Poitiers' successor, John of Gaunt, a mere third-rate commander,[3] lacked the qualities by which his able brother had been able to exert some influence over them. During this second phase of the War, France under the masterful leadership of Charles V and du Guesclin made remarkable progress through guerrilla war,[4] driving the English from France save for Calais and a strip between Bordeaux and Bayonne.[5] The deaths of Charles V and his splendid general in 1380 terminated the second phase of the Hundred Years' War.

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1. Continuator of Murimuth, p. 209; Chronique du petit Thalamus de Montpellier (Montpellier, Société archéologique de Montpellier, 1840), p. 77.

2. Thomas Walsingham, Ypodigma Neustriae, ed. H. T. Riley (London, 1876: R. s. no. 29, pt. VII), pp. 316, 7.

3. Continuator of Murimuth, p. 233.

4. du Guesclin was long familiar with this type, having started his career as a guerrilla in Charles of Blois' service (Cuvelier, t. I, lines 639-53).

5. Sir Charles Oman, "The Art of War in the Fifteenth Century," C. M. H., (New York, Macmillan Co., 1936), V. VIII, p. 647.

Marked by desultory fighting and truces because of the characters of the monarchs, the years 1380-1415 of this war saw the thriving of the brigands, but in a more limited area mainly because of the situation at Avignon. The indecisiveness of the warfare is to be accounted for by the exceedingly poor caliber of the opposing kings - Richard II of England (1377-99), who ascended the throne as a promising boy, but soon sullied it by tyranny, and Charles VI of France (1380-1422), who, although at first showing signs of capability, fell a victim to intermittent insanity.[1] The want of strong monarchs permitted greater license than ever for the Free Companies.[2] But, although they flourished, their range was more circumscribed than in the period after Poitiers. One reason for this was that Avignon was no longer their irresistible goal, because the papal schism caused a curtailment of revenue there, and, moreover, the

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1. At this time Europe was plagued by very inferior monarchs. Wenzel, the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia, was perhaps the greatest drunkard in history.

2. "Complaints to Charles VI", Ord., t. VII, p. 188. In this period there flourished two of the most picturesque of the condottieri-Geoffrey Tête-Noire and Aymerigot Marcel ("Histoire de Charles VI par Jean Jouvenal des Ursins", N. M. H. F., ed. J. F. Michaud and B. Poujoulat [Paris et Lyon, 1851], t. II, p. 374; "Chronique du Religieux de Saint Denys", D. I., ed. L. Bellaguet [Paris, Crapelet, 1839-52, 6 v.], serie I, no. VII, t. I, p. 501).

Avignonese Pope, Clement VII (1378-94), himself a renowned warrior,[1] employed mercenaries.[2]

In the early fifteenth century due to the French civil war, the prosperity and iniquity of the Free Companies were at high tide. Struggling for control of the French government, the two factions of Armagnacs and Burgundians hired condotti, not caring whether they plundered the country.[3] In fact the Armagnac companies committed such odious excesses that their name was applied to all freebooters. But in 1436 a French band wrought such nefariousness in Hainault and Burgundy that the name "Armagnac" was displaced by that of Écorcheurs, an epithet to which their practice of stripping everyone to the skin gave rise.[4]

Meanwhile, there began the third phase of the Hundred Years' War which witnessed the glory of the English and the degradation of the French arms. It opened with

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1. As Cardinal Legate he had commanded a Breton Company in Pope Gregory XI's war against Florence in 1376 (Ludwig von Pastor, The History of the Popes, ed. Frederick I. Antrobus [3rd edition, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1906], V. I, p. 103).

2. Chronique ... Valois, p. 282; Froissart, t. II, p. 59.

3. The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet, tr. Thomas Johnes (London, William Smith, 1845, 2 v.), V. I, pp. 354, 402; Thomas Basin:Historire de Charles VII, ed. Charles Samaran (Paris, 1933), p. 49.

4. Monstrelet, V. II, p. 60; Basin, p. 237.

Henry V's overwhelming victory at Agincourt (1415). In striking contrast to his enemies, who were usually impecunious, he possessed the financial resources to maintain an indentured army.[1] To oppose him France relied on condotti, undisciplined, unversed in arms, and drawn from Spain, Gascony, Italy, and Scotland.[2] (The Scotch, however, were admittedly fiercely proud, doughty warriors, who fought to the death.[3]). The Treaty of Troyes (1420) ended this phase of the struggle, and dictated the marriage of Henry V and Catherine (Charles VI's daughter), and the recognition of Henry as heir to the throne of the fleur-de-lis.[4]

However, the fourth and final period of the Hundred Years' War saw a complete reversal of the English and French fortunes. The deaths in 1422 of Henry V and Charles VI resulting in the accessions of the infant and feeble Henry VI in England and of the then lamentably wretched Charles VII

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1. Richard A. Newhall, The English Conquest of Normandy (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1924), p. 143.

2. Chronique de Jean Fèvre Seigneur de St. Remy, ed. F. Moraud (Paris, S. H. F., 1876-81), t. II, p. 79.

3. Basin, pp. 97-9; Jehan de Waurin, Recueil Des Chroniques Et Anchiennes Istories De La Grant Bretaigne, A Present Nomme Engleterre, ed. W. Hardy (London, 1891: R. S. no. 40), V. III, pp. 57-69.

4. Cosneau, op. cit., pp. 103 ff.

in France, signaled the advent of this epoch - making era. On the one hand, Joan of Arc's astonishing appearance caused the total demoralization of the superstitious English troops, who reverted to the riotous conduct and brigandage of Edward III's men. On the other hand, aroused from his lethargy by the prompting of his alluring but able mistress, Agnes Sorel,[1] Charles VII, after purging France of the more notorious of the Ecorcheurs, formed from the better elements of the freelances a national army, well trained, well disciplined, well armed, and well paid,[2] which by 1453 had expelled the English from every inch of French territory save Calais.

When a king could erect a permanent standing army from the remnants of the Free Companies, and then use it triumphantly to subdue his most formidable vassal, then, indeed, the foundations of feudalism were toppling.

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1. Vallet de Viriville, Histoire de Charles VII (Paris, V^ve J. Renouard, 1862-5, 3 to.), t. III, p. 2.

2. "Le Recouvrement de Normandie par Berry, Hérault de Roy," Narratives of the Expulsion of the English from Normandy, ed. Joseph Stevenson (London, 1863: R. s. no. 32), pp. 370,1.

C H A P T E R IV.

THE ORGANIZATION AND TACTICS OF THE FREE COMPANIES

Coming from practically every part of Europe, the members of the Free Companies gained wealth and power. Emerging from the commercial revolution of the eleventh century as a very wealthy nation,[1] France during the Hundred Years' War became the Mecca of soldiers of fortune, who considered it as their exclusive domain.[2] This vast attractiveness of France to such men explains the international membership of the Free Companies, one band frequently including warriors from England, Scotland, Wales, Germany, Holland, Hainault, Flanders, Navarre, Aragon, and Castile, as well as the French provinces, especially Brittany, Gascony, Limousin, Perigord, Auvergne, and Foix.[3] Although many of them were of poor and humble birth, nevertheless, through sheer ability members of the Free Companies could become rich and powerful,[4]

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1. Froissart, t. II, pp. 446-8.

2. Ibid., t. I, p. 502.

3. Chronicon Angliae, pp. 37, 50; Froissart, t. I, pp. 373, 407, 453, t. II, p. 64; Knighton, V. II, p. 499; le Bel, t. II, p. 236; Religieux de Saint-Denys, t. I, p. 499.

4. Scalacronica, by Sir Thomas Gray of Heton, Knight. A Chronicle of England and Scotland from 1066 to 1362, ed. Joseph Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1836: Maitland Club, no. 40), p. 178.

as the attainments of several noted captains show. Sir Robert Knolles rose from the lowest ranks to prominence in the English army and to the command of a large Free Company;[1] Bacon was made usher-at-arms by Philip VI;[2] Crocuard started life as a page in Holland, but became such a mighty captain in Brittany that he could afford to spurn Philip VI's offer of knighthood and the hand of an heiress, along with a lrge sum of money;[3] German squires like Albrecht and Hanequin Françoys[4] and Limousin squires, like Aymerigot Marcel amassed great fortunes;[5] and Sir Hugh Calveley became an English admiral.[6]

But the freebooters were mixed not only as to nationality and social origin, but as to legal family status.

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1. Chronicon Angliae, p. 39; Knighton, V, II, p. 102; le Bel, t. II, p. 216.
2. Froissart, t. I, p. 275; le Bel, t. II, p. 144.
3. Froissart, t. I, pp. 275, 6; le Bel, t. II, pp. 144,5.
4. le Bel, t. II, pp. 237, 8.
5. Froissart, t. II, p. 57.
6. Chronicon Angliae, pp. 221, 2.

Cadets like the Archpriest, Arnaud de Cervole, and Sir John Hawkwood had an opportunity to gain glory and gold.[1] The problem, ever pressing upon fathers of proud pretentions but wayward morals, of providing for their numerous illegitimate offspring was solved by their being permitted to form bands to plunder France. The chronicles abound in the names of the "bourgs" (bastards) de Carlat, Anglois, de Camillas, de Mauléon, de Marueil, de Breteuil, Camus, de Pierregort, de l'Esparre, d'Armesen, de Copane, de Thian, de Vignolles, de Brunen, de Sallebriche, Penard, de la Hire, Pierre de Regnault, and innumerable others.[2]

If there is honor among thieves, there was also some evidence of principle among these oddly assorted freelances. Although primarily interested in fame and fortune,[3] the Free Company leaders, especially the English were (always provided that their pay was forthcoming) to a considerable degree loyal

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1. John Temple - Leader and Guiseppe Marcotti, Sir John Hawkwood, tr. Leader Scott (London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1889), p. 7.

2. Chronique ... Valois, p. 144; Froissart, t. II, pp. 57, 376, 385, 409, 671; Herald, p. 73; Monstrelet, t. I, pp. 355, 368, 631, t. II, pp. 51, 97; Last Continuator of Nangis, t. II, p. 343; Religieux de Saint-Denys, t. I, pp. 303, 499.

3. The Archpriest's band called itself "Societa D'ell' Acquisto" (le baron de Zur Lauben, "Mémoire sur Arnaud de Cervole", Mémoires del'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, t. XXV,pp. 155 ff).

to their employer. Their attitude is nowhere better expressed than in Jean de Faukemont's vow: "If the English king ... enter into France ... I would go and set fire before him, and I would neither spare church nor altar, neither woman with child, nor infant that I could find, nor kinsmen nor friend no matter how much he might be to me as long as he will to grieve king Edward; to accomplish his vow I would pain my body." Thereupon his comrades replied, "Such a man is to be loved..."[1] Furthermore, although he was heavily fined in 1376 because of his army's failure in France,[2] Knolles in 1378 was again in the royal service, faithfully laying waste Brittany.[3] Moreover, the English condottieri - Calveley, Hewett, Devereux, and others - who had accompanied Charles V's agent du Guesclin in the campaign which had placed Henry of Trastamara on the Castilian throne, at once joined the Black Prince when he declared in favor of Henry's rival, Pedro the Cruel, because it would have been treason to oppose the Prince.[4]

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1. Political Poems and Songs, ed. Thomas Wright (London, 1859: R. s. no. 14), V. I, pp. 19,20.

2. Chronicon Angliae, p. 78.

3. Foedera, V. III, pt. III, p. 77; Thomas Walsingham, quondam monachi S. Albani, Historia Angelicana, ed. Henry T. Riley (London, 1863-4: R. S. no. 28 pt. 1), V. I, pp. 365, 374.

4. "Mémoires sur du Guesclin", t. IV, p. 387.

Within the Free Company itself, reinforced by stern discipline, the strictest loyalty to the captain prevailed.[1] Whenever he was captured, the members would ransom him (e.g., Marcel)[2] or forcibly rescue him (e.g., Knolles).[3] Also they faithfully accepted his choice of a successor, as they did Geoffrey Tête-Noire's who selected his cousins, Alain and Pierre Roux.[4] Still more important is the absence of all records of treachery against the leaders except two - that of Limousin, who betrayed his captain, Louis Raimbaut, after the latter had had him stripped, whipped, and dismissed for intimacy with his mistress;[5] and the assassination of the Archpriest by one of his men after their company had returned penniless and decimated from a disastrous expedition to Alsace.[6]

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1. This quality, as we shall see, suggested to a French king the idea that, if he should succeed in transferring it to himself by permanently retaining the adventurers in his pay, then, indeed, he would possess a force potent enough to give him hope of smashing turbulent vassals, particularly the English monarch.

2. Froissart, t. II, p. 58.

3. Knighton, V. II, p. 102.

4. Froissart, t. II, pp. 750,1.

5. Ibid., t. II, pp. 411,2.

6. Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, p. 240.

Together with loyalty, the freebooters had another extenuating quality, that embodied in the term chivalry. Although frequently regarding women as mere creatures for the satisfaction of lust, nevertheless, they sometimes rose to exalted love, as did Sir Eustace d' Aubrecicourt, whose love for Countess Isabel de Juliers was pure and honorable.[1] More significant was their often gentle treatment of women when they captured towns; Jouel[2] and Perrot le Béarnais[3] were particularly admirable in this regard. Moreover, in their relations with each other, and even toward their noble opponents, they displayed the utmost politeness. Knolles, Calveley, and de Buch evinced the highest regard for their implacable foe, du Guesclin, who reciprocated the feeling;[4] furthermore ,the notorious captain d' Albret so taunted the Black Prince for the inveteracy of his hostility toward du Guesclin after capturing him at Najera, that the Prince released the great captain on ransom. Thereupon Caveley, another

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1. Froissart, t. I, p. 411.
2. Chonique ,.. Valois, p. 135.
3. Froissart, t. II, p. 674.
4. Cuvelier, t. I, l. 5348-52; "Mémoires sur du Guesclin", t. IV, pp. 380, 422, 3, t. V, p. 75; Walsingham, Historia Angelicana, V. I, p. 407.

freebooter, offered to aid in paying the ransom![1]

Notwithstanding their sometimes strong admiration for their valiant foes, the adventurers, as shown by their conduct in battle and by the violent deaths of many of them, were savage warriors. They should in no sense be classed with such fifteenth century condottieri as Carmignola and others who either would not fight, or engaged in prearranged battles in which no one was killed.[2] On the contrary, the brigands in the Hundred Years' War were hardened fighters, who loved war for its own sake, and who enjoyed themselves most when the blood flowed most freely.[3] Also, although there was a great temptation during battle to capture one's foe for ransom rather than kill him, nevertheless, there are cases where prominent persons like Charles of Blois, who could have paid a huge ransom, were deliberately killed,[4] partly because of the freelances' fury in battle, and partly because of the condotti's eagerness to remove redoubtable foes of their employers. Of

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1. "Mémoires sur du Guesclin," t. IV, pp. 447-454.

2. Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, tr. Allan H. Gilbert (Chicago, Packard and Co., 1941), pp. 134, 5.

3. Examples are the struggle in Brittany ("Combat des Trente", C.C.F, ed. J. A. Buchon (Paris, J. Carez, 1826), t. XIV, pp. 301-20); Jouel's apprehension that du Guesclin would not fight at Cocherel ("Mémoires sur du Guesclin", t. IV, p. 262); and d' Aubrecicourt's eagerness to start the battle at Poitiers (Froissart, t. I, p. 347).

4. Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, p. 235.

significance is the Bascot de Mauléon's statement that most of the Free Company leaders died in battle.[1] There is ample justification for this generalization in the cases of Geoffrey Tête-Noire, Dagworth, Briquet, Thian, Carsuelle, Gilles, Helme, Diere, Jouel, Marueil, and others.[2] Those escaping this fate either were executed, as were Marcel, the two Roux, Sercot, and Bude;[3] or poisoned, as Batefol was by Charles the Bad,[4] or caused to perish in prison, as was the Count of Auxerre.[5] A few, it must be admitted, were able to retire. Such were Knolles and Calveley, who, unlike their comrades whose booty "had melted in their hands as snow in sunlight,"[6] had tenaciously clung to their plunder and used it to acquire large estates, and to endow charitable and religious institutions.[7]

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1. Froissart, t. II, p. 410.

2. Chronique normande, pp. 164-7; Chronique ... Valois, p. 197; Froissart, t. II, pp. 410, 750; Les Grandes Chroniques, t. V, pp. 494, 5; Knighton, V. II, p. 67; Robertus de Avesbury de Gestis Mirabilibus Regis Edwardi Tertii, ed.E.M. Thompson (London, 1889: R. s. no. 93), p. 411.

3. Chronique ... Valois, pp. 197, 282; Froissart, t. III, pp. 40, 79.

4. Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, p. 429.

5. Chronique ... Valois, p. 196.

6. Last Continuator of Nangis, t. II, p. 364.

7. Documents in Monasticon Anglicanum, ed. Sir William Dugdale (London, 1819), V. II, pp. 713, 4; R. P., V. III, pp. 285 b, 289 b, V. V, pp. 135, 306; Eulogium, V. III, p. 367.

In addition to a kind of morality and very evident hardiness, the condottieri displayed much astuteness. Wherever they wished to capture an important town, they marched at night through secluded roads and woods, arriving at daybreak before the walls. There they concealed the men in ambush; then they sent several members disguised as merchants into the town. Once admitted, the latter seized the châtelain (captain) and any one in a position to give the alarm; thereupon the "merchants" sounded the trumpet to summon their hidden companions. The band then pillaged the town, carrying off all precious objects in their wagons. They ransomed the principal bourgeoisie for money, horses, silk, and cloth-of-gold draperies; the poor people they would exchange for horseshoes and nails.[1]

In their tactics for battle they also revealed cleverness. The practice was to emulate the Black Prince at Poitiers in selecting an advantageous site like a well-protected hill, where the divisions of longbowmen, crossbowmen, and men-at-arms (i.e., cavalry) were placed. Then, after dissimulating their

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1. Froissart, t. I, p. 275; Last Continuator of Nangis, t. II, p. 327; Religieux de Saint-Denys, t. I, pp. 499-501; Jacob Twinger de Königshofen, "Chronik", C. d. S., ed. Karl von Hegel (Leipzig, Historical Commission, 1870), V. VIII, ch. II, p. 137.

number so as to deceive the enemy, they would await or attract his attack. When he came, they would meet his charge with a barrage of stones, arrows, and bolts. Next, with banners and pennons flying and shouting their fierce war cries, the dismounted men-at-arms, clad in helmets, coats of mail, and gauntlets, would rush forth in a compact, circular mass. Their armament was also formidable: although in the heat of battle they often discarded it in favor of the deadly battleaxe, the men-at-arms used a sixteen-foot lance which it required both a knight and squire to bear. Frequently, as at Brignais and Auray, the adventurers resorted again to the Prince of Wales' famous device which won the day at Poitiers, a rear guard attack.[1]

The freebooters were likewise adroit in resisting assaults on their strongholds. Choosing by preference some lofty crag accessible from only one side, they heavily fortified it, and then adequately stocked it with provisions to withstand prolonged siege. When attacked, the soldiers of fortune retorted with crossbow bolts, and hung animal skins and bales of wool and cotton on the walls (especially masonry walls) to lessen

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1. Froissart, t. I, 456, t. II, p. 389; Herald, pp. 62, 99; "Mémoires sur du Guesclin", t. IV, pp. 294, 298.

the pressure or shock exerted at particular points by the seige machines. They built countermines to offset the besiegers' mines. As a last resort the brigands used a secret passage to escape.[1]

Thus, the Free Companies were, by their membership, their code, and their military skill, most formidable adversaries.

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1. Froissart, t. I, pp. 647, 664,5; "Mémoires sur du Guesclin", t. IV, pp. 275,6.

C H A P T E R V.

THE ATTEMPTS TO EXTERMINATE THE FREE COMPANIES

Although aroused at length by the conduct of the Free Companies, which, by and large, was rapacious and despicable, decent men faced, because of the miserable condition of France, a herculean task in attempting to suppress the hated bands. The freebooters' unbridled arrogance and odious depradations mounted to such a height that they threatened to make a mockery of law and order.[1] To extirpate them, however, was a most difficult task. Not only was it necessary to cope with their power and utter unscrupulousness, but also at their first appearance it was impossible to establish a united front against them. The imprisonment of King John II and many nobles after their capture at Poitiers, together with the heavy imposts necessary to secure their release, goaded the people into rebellion.[2]

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1. This is vividly illustrated in the hymns and prayers chanted to invoke Divine aid against the loathsome ravishers; an example is printed in M. Lebeuf, Dissertations sur l'histoire de Paris (Paris), t. III, pp. 432, 3.

2. Chronique normande, p. 145; Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, p. 110; Last Continuator of Nangis, t. II, pp. 245, 263-7, 325.

Nevertheless, by the mid-fourteenth century, although with only partial success, the peasantry, the throne, and the papacy acted against the ravishers. Led by men of their own class, Guillaume l' Alouette and Grandferré, the peasants fought furiously against the adventurers in 1359.[1] After his release in 1360, the feeble John the Good planned to conduct the freebooters on what he hoped would be for them a self-immolating crusade to the Holy Land, but nothing of the grandiose scheme was executed.[2] Then in 1362 he dispatched his lieutenant, Jacques de Bourbon, and a feudal array, along with the Archpriest against the Tard-Venus, but the chivalrous de Bourbon was overwhelmed and mortally wounded at Brignais, falling prey to a repetition of the English tactics at Poitiers, where he himself had been captured.[3] Now threatened by the advance of the Tard-Venus, Pope Innocent VI came to John's assistance by excommunicating them and raising crusaders to hurl at them; but many of the former, not receiving their wages, joined the latter. Thereupon the pontiff

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1. Chronique normande, pp. 147,8; Last Continuator of Nangis, t. II, pp. 288-93.

2. Froissart, t. I, pp. 463,4; Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, p. 228.

3. Chronique normande, p. 140; Froissart, t. I, pp. 454-7; Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, p. 225; Lescot, pp. 104, 152.

summoned the Marquis of Montferrat to lead them in a worthy cause, giving him a large sum of money to pay them for an incursion into Lombardy in behalf of the papal war against the Visconti; but only a portion availed themselves of this opportunity.[1] Meanwhile, the Dauphin, Duke Charles of Normandy, had sent du Guesclin and later Guillaume Merle to crush the brigands' power in Normandy;[2] but the great du Guesclin could not restrain his Breton mercenary troops from indulging in the very pillaging which he was commissioned to prevent in the freebooters.[3]

The sagacious and practical King Charles V of France (1364-80)[4] had a three-fold policy for eradicating the pillagers: (1) getting them to participate in foreign campaigns; (2)hammering them with all his resources; and (3) winning them over to his side. In three notable instances he made use of the first device. When the ruler of Hungary desired the adventurers' services against the Turks, Charles V

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1. Chronique normande, p. 156; Froissart, t. I, pp. 456-60; le Bel, t. II, pp. 275-7; Thesaurus novus anecdotorum, ed. Edmond Martène and Ursin Durand (Paris, 1717), t. II, pp. 995, 1027.

2. "Mandements", no. 95; Chronique normande, pp. 157 ff; Cuvelier, t. I, l. 3670,l.

3. Last Continuator of Nangis, t. II, p. 346.

4. Christine, op. cit., p. 15.

granted them permission to pass through France; but the soldiers of fortune abandoned the project when some of them declared that the frightful condition of Hungary would force them to perish.[1] Next in 1365 Charles gave du Guesclin a huge sum to pay the Free Companies for an expedition to Castile to overthrow King Pedro the Cruel in favor of his natural half-brother, Henry of Trastamara,[2] using as a pretext Pedro's probable murder of his wife, Blanche de Bourbon, Charles' sister-in-law.[3] Pope Urban V, who had previously excommunicated the Free Companies,[4] also contributed to the campaign, but the money was extorted from him.[5] Although the expedition deposed Pedro, it did not fulfill Charles' hope of being a device for the extermination of the participants: many survived[6] to return to France. In 1375

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1. Froissart, t. I, p. 502.

2. Henry and his Castilian followers had previously been engaged by Charles to defend the sénéchausée of Carcassonne against the freelances (petit Thalamus, p. 52).

3. "Mandements", no. 851; Trésor des Chartes, série J, no. 381; Christine, op. cit., pp. 10,1; Chronique normande, p. 179; Froissart, t. I, pp. 503,4; Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, pp. 237-9; "Mémoires sur du Guesclin", t. IV, pp. 306 ff.; Cronicas de los Reges de Castilla por D. Pedro Lopez de Ayala, ed. Don Eugenio de Llaguno Amirola (Madrid, Academia de Madrid, 1779), pp. 328 ff.

4. C. Baronius, Annales Ecclesiasticae una cum critica historica chronologica P. A. Pagii, contin. O. Raynaldus, ed. J. D. Mansi (Lucca, 1738-46), V. XXVI, p. 110.

5. "Mémoires sur du Guesclin", t. IV, pp. 328-32.

6. Ayala, op. cit., p. 422.

Charles the Wise supported Sire Enguerrand de Coucy when the latter hired the Free Companies to recover his maternal lands in Austria; but the force advanced only to the Rhine, because the freebooters were disgusted with the unprofitable destitution of the country in contrast with the splendor of France.[1] By sending du Guesclin against them,[2] by subjecting them to the rigors of "scorched-earth" tactics,[3] and by meting out mortal punishment to captured brigands,[4] Charles V resorted to violence to crush the predatory bands. Finally, he tried to be gentle in order to tame these wild beasts; for example, he bribed captains to surrender their castles,[5] permitted a considerable number to ransom themselves from imprisonment, and pardoned others.[6]

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1. Froissart, t. I, pp. 703-6.
2. "Mémoires sur du Guesclin", t. V, p. 69; Les Grandes Chroniques, t. VI, p. 466.
3. "Mandements", nos. 213, 441, 471, 1380, 1790.
4. Chronique normande, pp. 165, 167, 169, 193; Chronique ... Valois, pp. 151, 169-70, 224.
5. "Mandements", nos. 400, 465, 699, 1144, 1711; Last Continuator of Nangis, t. II, p. 358.
6. Chronique normande, pp. 170, 172, 174; Chronique ... Valois, pp. 148, 250; Froissart, t. I, p. 484, t. II, pp. 408, 410.

During Charles VI's rule and Charles VII's early reign, three frightful events - an insurrection, a civil war, and a foreign war - prevented effective action against the brigands. In the opening years of Charles VI's government campaigns under Guillaume le Boutillier, Louis de Sancerre, Duke Louis de Bourbon, and Marshal de Bouccicaut accomplished the downfall of powerful condottieri like Geoffrey Tête-Noire, Marcel, and others,[1] but failed to destroy the institution of the Free Company. The uprising of the Tuchins, peasants turned bandits, for a time diverted the concentration of royal forces against the better established soldiers of fortune.[2] During this pitiful king's later years nothing could be done on account of the sanguinary Armagnac-Burgundian struggle,[3] and the renewal of Anglo-French warfare. The same conflicts likewise handicapped Charles VII in the beginning of his reign, although he did compel Roderique

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1. Jouvenal des Ursins, pp. 347, 361; Religieux de Saint-Denys, t. I, pp. 122-4, 303; "Le livre des faicts du mareschal de Bouccicaut", N. H. F., ed. J. F. Michaud and B. Poujoulat (Paris et Lyon, Guyot Frères, 1851), série i, t. II, pp. 224 ff.

2. Jouvenal des Ursins, pp. 361,2, Religieux de Saint-Denys, t. I, pp. 307-13.

3. The nobles of Dauphiné did, however, oppose a large Gascon force in 1415, but were decisively defeated (Jouvenal des Ursins, pp. 403,4).

de Villandrando's band to turn its destructive power against the English.[1]

Meanwhile, the institution of the Free Company had spread its evil tentacles to embrace the fatherland of many of the renowned condottieri, England. After returning from campaigning in France, many English freelances persisted in their "occupation" in their native land. There the institution received the name "livery and maintenance" because some powerful person, usually a noble, provided uniforms and upkeep for the freebooters. This practice forced King Richard II to labor against it in 1390.[2] After the conclusion of the Hundred Years' War in 1453, the English adventurers returned home unemployed; but quickly finding opportunity for displaying their talents in the Wars of the Roses (1455-85),[3] they became a scourge to the nation. In vain King Edward IV (1461-83) condemned livery and maintenance,[4]

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1. Monstrelet, t. II, p. 74.
2. "Ordinance Concerning Livery and Maintenance", Statutes of the Realm (London, R. C., 1810-28), V. II, pp. 74 ff.
3. This struggle was between the Houses of Lancaster and York for possession of the English throne.
4. Rotuli Parliamentorum, V. V, p. 487.

and ordered the mayors and sheriffs to proscribe all its practitioners.[1] The English throne, largely responsible for the origin and operations of the Free Companies, appeared to have created a Frankenstein monster.

Thus, in both France and England determined efforts to exterminate the system of marauding bands had failed.

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1. Coventry leet Book (The), or mayor's register, 1420-1555, ed. M. D. Harris (London, Early English Text Society, 1907), pp. 373,4.

C H A P T E R VI

THE DOWNFALL OF THE FREE COMPANIES

Although aware that the monarchy's military and financial systems were roots sprouting Free Companies, Charles V, nevertheless, did not dig enough to extirpate them. The attempts to exterminate the bands described in the preceding chapter did not attack the basic cause for their existence, i.e., the nature of the royal military and financial organizations. Nonetheless, Charles V had discerned this fundamental difficulty through the discovery that his mercenary captains often carried on their rolls names of men not in service, or by refusal to pay their men who were in service, drove them to pillaging for subsistence. There was a patent need for regulation. He therefore enacted the following measure: the captains were placed under the surveillance of the royal constable and marshals, who were instructed to certify the rosters; each soldier must swear to abstain from pillaging, and to return home when his royal company was disbanded; the captains must receive commissions from the king, princes, or lieutenant generals in order to raise troops; each captain was to receive 100 francs monthly, but was held responsible for his men's disorders.[1] The wise monarch did not,

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1. Ord., t. V, p. 658.

however, go far enough, for to hire troops for merely one campaign, upon the completion of which they were dismissed, almost invariably meant their formation into Free Companies in order to live off the land. Moreover, although he perceived that adequate pay was indispensable to prevent desertion and ravaging, and met this problem by the imposition of sales taxes and the gabelle (salt tax), yet, on his deathbed he practically nullified this action by repealing the fouages (direct taxes).[1] Thus Charles the Wise did not accomplish the overthrow of the Free Companies. However, he did originate the method of procedure for their eradication which was to bear fruit in the hands of his grandson, Charles VII "the Well-Served".

During a period of propitious circumstances, Charles VII (1422-61), chiefly by forming a national army from the better flayers, wiped out the Écorcheurs. Joan of Arc's appearance, which infused a new patriotism into the French, and the Treaty of Arras in 1435, which terminated the Franco-Burgundian strife,[2] meant that the problem of the flayers could be considered.

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1. W. T. Waugh, A History of Europe from 1378 to 1494 (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), p. 11.

2. "Mémoires d' Olivier de la Marche", M. H. F., ed. C. B. Petitot, t. VIII, pp. 19-23.

Therefore, in 1439 on the remonstrance of the Estates-General assembled at Orléans, the principle of army reform culminating in the establishment of permanent troops was adopted, along with the provisos that the king alone was to raise troops, and that all non-royal companies must be dissolved.[1] The conflict with England prevented the execution of the plan until 1444, when the marriage of Henry VI of England and Margaret of Anjou resulted in a truce.[2] Thereupon in order to carry out the program for eliminating the Écorcheurs the Dauphin Louis conducted approximately one-half of them to aid Emperor Frederick III against the Swiss,[3] while Charles VII led the other half to help René of Anjou against Metz.[4] These expeditions, especially the Dauphin's,

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1. Ord., t. XIII, p. 306.

2. Basin, p. 301.

3. Burchard Zink, "Chronik," C. d. S., ed. Karl von Hegel (Leipzig, Historical Commission, 1866), V. V., pp. 170-6.

4. Relation du siège de Metz en 1444 par Charles VII et René d' Anjou, ed. Mm. de Saulcy and Huguenin aîné (Metz, 1835), pp. 298 ff; Chronique de Charles VII par Jean Chartier, ed. Vallet de Viriville (Paris, P. Jannet, 1858), t. II, pp. 43-7; Chronique de Mathieu d' Escouchy, ed. G. du Fresne de Beaucourt (Paris, Mme Ve Jules Renouard, 1863), t. I, pp. 25 ff.

wrought great havoc in the ranks of the adventurers,[1] making it possible for the king to deal effectively with the survivors in 1445. Charles VII divided them into two classes - the disreputable elements, whom he sent home with pardons but under orders to remain peaceful or face grave punishment;[2] and the trustworthy ones, from whom, because their discipline and knowledge of war promised to be of inestimable value in the crown's struggle against recalcitrant vassals, the monarch formed the national army, the Compagnies d'ordonnance. There were about twenty such companies, each consisting (with some variations[3]) of about six hundred men.[4] Meanwhile, there had been a financial reorganization, resulting in a new tax (taille),[5] the income from which was sufficient to support the new Compagnies. To supplement the Compagnies Charles VII instituted the "Free Archers", every fifty hearths furnishing one.[6] The

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1. d'Escouchy, t. I, p. 20, note 3.
2. Bibliothecae Baluzianae pars tertia, complectens codices mss., diplomata et collectanea (Paris, 1719), fol. 46, no. 9037; Trésor des Chartes, Reg. CLXXIX.
3. Trésor des Chartes, serie K. 68, no. 143.
4. d'Escouchy, t. I, pp. 51 ff.
5. Ord., t. XIII, p. 306.
6. Ibid., t. XIV, p. 2.

combination of Compagnies d' ordonnance and Free Archers, together with the increased use of cannon due to the efforts of the Bureau brothers, brought about the ruin of the Écorcheurs by the time the Hundred Years' War closed in 1453.

In England King Henry VII (1485-1509), successfully employed the Star Chamber to crush livery and maintenance. Upon his accession, which terminated the Wars of the Roses, he determined to end the chaos resulting from the notorious activities of the bands. Therefore, after forcing the lords in 1485 to swear to refrain from engaging in livery and maintenance,[1] the monarch ordered the secret judicial body, the Star Chamber, to proceed against the adventurers.[2] Then, in 1504 he reinforced this action by enacting a measure which condemned livery and maintenance, and which empowered the Star Chamber to stamp them out.[3] Meeting in secret, and permitted by the crown to use any means to secure testimony and to execute its decisions, this tribunal swiftly destroyed the Free Companies, for there is henceforth no mention of the hitherto odious marauders.

Thus the French throne by the middle of the fifteenth century, and the English crown by the end of that century had brought about the downfall of the then useless institution of the Free Company.

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1. R. P., V. VI, p. 287.
2. "Star Chamber Act", Statutes, V.II, pp. 509 ff.
3. "Statute of Liveries", Statutes, V. II, pp. 658 ff.

C H A P T E R VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Like all human institutions the Free Company passed through a process of birth, efflorescence, and death. With its roots in the eleventh century, when overpopulation had produced a crop of adventurers, this form of military scourge appeared during the turbulent time of the second crusade (1147-50). Flourishing during the last half of the twelfth century because of wars growing out of feudal ties, its excesses, particularly in periods of peace when it took to vagabondage, raised up against it a confraternity, the Capuchonnés, who dispersed its numbers in 1183 and drove many of them back into the monarchical and seignorial services. Finally, the Treaty of Paris (1229), strongly reinforced by a league of church, communes, and nobility, crushed it in France for over a century.

Next cropping up in war-torn Sicily, the Free Company system spread its talons from there to the Byzantine Empire and then to the Duchy of Athens. In Sicily Emperor Frederick II's struggle with the papacy (1239-50), together with the Angevin-Hohenstaufen (1264-8) and the Angevin-Aragonese dynastic wars (1282-1302), resulted in the infilitration of a horde of mercenaries. Deprived of employment by the termination

of the strife in 1302, many soldiers of fortune joined with Roger de Flor to form the "Grand Company". After a checkered career in the Byzantine imperial service, this splendidly organized and disciplined band reached a peak by seizing control of the Duchy of Athens in 1311, and by retaining it for sixty-six years.

Then, foiling all attempts to uproot it, the Free Company organization attained the zenith in the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453). Both the English king and the French king followed the policy of indenture, i.e., each contracted with captains for the services of large bands raised by them. After the Battle of Poitiers (1356), and especially after the Treaty of Brétigny-Calais (1360), the detestable acts of the freebooters rose to such a pitch that a number of devices, notably Charles V of France's hiring them to participate in the imbroglio over the Castilian throne, were attempted to exterminate them; but their stern discipline and loyalty to the organization, together with their hardiness and astuteness, enabled them to thwart such efforts, and to develop their power to an unprecedented degree in the lamentably weak reign of Charles VI and the early reign of Charles VII.

Aided by the labor of Joan of Arc and Agnes Sorel, Charles VII, by forming a permanent army from the tractable Écorcheurs, extirpated the Free Companies from France in 1445.

By making possible the advance of French arms against the English, the work and spirit of "The Maid of Orleans" enabled the monarch to devote full time and resources to the urgent problem of crushing the freelances. Aroused from lethargy by the efforts of Agnes Sorel, his mistress, Charles VII reduced the numbers of the flayers by hiring them for campaigns against the Swiss cantons and Metz in 1444. In the following year he divided the survivors into two classes, the rabble being dismissed to peaceful pursuits, while the better element was incorporated into the new Compagnies d'ordonnance, the foundation of the national army of France.

About this time in England, i.e., during the Wars of the Roses, there flourished the custom of livery and maintenance which was finally suppressed by Henry VII's use of the Star Chamber. Forced to return to England at the close of the Hundred Years' War in 1453, many adventurers became the retainers of powerful nobles; such was livery and maintenance. This practice became exceedingly abominable during the Lancastrian-Yorkist dynastic struggle (1455-85). Upon gaining the throne in 1485, Henry VII acted against the marauders; by giving unlimited power to the Star Chamber, the secret court, he exterminated the malefactors.

In conclusion, we may say that in the history of European military organization the Free Companies appeared in

the period between the heyday of the feudal array and the emergence of the national army, and were largely instrumental in the transition itself. Since their vassals' services of forty days was wholly inadequate, the monarchs resorted to the use of bands of mercenaries. In the second half of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century, the indentured system accounted almost completely for the composition of the English[1] and French armies.[2] However, as they were employed only in time of hostilities, the soldiers of fortune in periods of truce and peace became ravishers who produced a reign of terror. Consequently, the French monarchy had to subdue them. Sensing, however, that the marvelous ability of these veteran warriors might be of invaluable aid to the crown, Charles VII made the more worthy flayers the nucleus of the standing army.

Of equally vital significance was the contribution of the Free Companies to the destruction of feudalism. By placing at the monarch's disposal thousands of trained, disciplined,

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1. Exchequer Accounts, 24/20; 25/9, 17, 18, 19; 28/27; 30/25, 29; 32/40; 34/6; 68/4, nos. 92, 93; 68/5, nos. 95 ff.; 68/6; 396/13; Foedera, IX, 433; Issue Rolls; 369/4 ff.; Pipe Rolls, 191/54 d; 196/42.

2. Ord., V. V, p. 658; V. XIV, p. 69; Chronique de Jean Fèvre, t. II, p. 79.

and loyal troops, they enabled him to dispence with the feudality's very grudging and indisciplined service of forty days. He could thus engage in widespread campaigns in his program of centralizing the government. The accomplishment of this purpose meant either expelling his vassals from their fiefs,[1] or reducing their status to that of his subjects, and their fiefs to the status of private property. A program so inimical to the interests of the nobles could, of course, never have been realized with an army recruited and led by themselves.

Finally, by being prominent factors in the destruction of feudalism, the Free Companies assisted in undermining the Middle Ages. Made possible by the monarchical-bourgeois coalition first formed in the twelfth century, the Free Companies combined with king and burgher to build a triple alliance which succeeded in replacing the feudal state, the political foundation of the medieval structure, by the dynastic one.[2] It thus helped to bring the splendid medieval epoch to a close, and to usher in the beginning, politically, of the modern age.

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1. The leading example is that of the French monarchs depriving the English kings of their holdings in France. The Compagnies d'ordonnance, the French national army, struck the final blow, but, let us reiterate, it was composed of the remnants of the Free Companies.
2. The dynastic state was the exclusive possession of the king's family (Thompson and Johnson, op. cit., p. 877).

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